

THE LIBERAL CHRISTIAN.

"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE,
GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN."—LUKE II. 14.

VOL. I.]

BROOKLYN, (CONN.) FEBRUARY 28, 1823.

[No. 3.]

FOR THE LIBERAL CHRISTIAN. PREACHING CHRIST.

It is sometimes thought that to preach Christ, it is necessary constantly to hold up to view certain favorite doctrines or opinions mostly of an abstruse nature termed "orthodox sentiments," relating to the character of man's heart—divine influence and human agency—the decrees of God—redemption—atonement and others. These are called the "distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel," to reject which is error as bad as infidelity.—That instruction is pronounced defective—no better than a lesson of heathen morality, which does not dwell upon them.

But, to say nothing of the truth of the doctrines alluded to, we may observe in the first place, that they do not appear to have been insisted on by our Saviour. What was the subject of his instructions to the people from the Mount? What the language he employed? Do we find there any traces of those opinions, which are sometimes inculcated concerning his nature and person?—any intimation that he, who was then speaking, was the same being as the Father, in whose name he taught—uniting in himself an infinite and a finite nature—forming one of three persons blended in the same substance? Do we hear any thing of the inherent depravity of the human heart—of the inability of man, since the fall of our first parents to do the will of God—any thing of the doctrine of the divine decrees, election and reprobation, as it is usually explained to imply a determination of God from eternity to rescue a certain number from the miseries of a corrupt nature, and to pass by the rest, withholding from them that influence, without which it is made forever impossible for them to recover themselves—and other doctrines of a similar description? Is there the remotest allusion to them in any thing our Saviour said on that occasion, when he imparted many of his most solemn instructions to his disciples and to the multitude? Is there any intimation thrown out—any thought expressed—any word dropped, which could possibly suggest them to the mind? No, nothing of all this, but a

great deal on the moral duties—on rectitude, love of our neighbor—equity—compassion—the government of the thoughts—the restraint of the appetites and passions.

Besides that the silence of our Saviour, on subjects of this abstruse nature, should lead us to suspect, that they are not subjects of the greatest importance, it may be objected, in the next place, that the doctrines in question, if true, have little practical influence—that the discussion of them serves to perplex rather than enlighten the mind—that several of them are too abstract and dark to be comprehended without much study and acute discernment—that some of them are such that common minds must despair of ever having any thing more than a dim idea, if they have any idea at all, concerning them—that controversy about them tends to withdraw the thoughts from the main end of religion, which is to make the heart better—to fix the thoughts on what is of a merely speculative nature—that it serves, besides to destroy the sweet tone of the feelings—to irritate the mind—that it leads men to forget the esteem, good will, candor, feelings of catholicism and charity, which as beings possessing infirm and fallible natures they mutually owe to each other.

Further it may be objected, with propriety, that the doctrines alluded to are, in the opinion of many wise, learned and good men, not true—that they cannot be found any where in the sacred writings—that they are among the corruptions of Christianity, which prejudice, weakness, error, or want of time in the early reformers alone caused to be spared—that they are dishonorable to God and fix a dark stain on religion.

They are often indeed, defended as comprehending the substance of the Gospel.—But no one certainly has a right to say positively that they are true, and that those, who omit to declare them depart from Christianity. Every one is authorized to judge for himself what the doctrines taught in the scriptures are; and he is accountable for his conclusions to none but his God. We are fallible and may err—but who shall determine, where the bounds between truth and

error lie, so that he can be certain, that he is right and all who differ from him are under delusion? To assume the truth of particular doctrines or opinions, which are subjects of controversy among Christians, is the greatest presumption and arrogance, folly and absurdity. It is to transfer to ourselves the attribute of infallibility, which we deny to the Pope.—But the fact is, most Protestant sects have, with regard to the property of infallibility, differed from the Catholic Church less in reality than in appearance, less in practice than in theory. The principal difference between them appears to consist in this—the Catholics have openly claimed infallibility, Protestant sects have not directly arrogated it to themselves in the abstract, but in their practice, have been as illiberal, exclusive and dogmatical, as intolerant of all opinions different from their own, as the pretended successor of St. Peter at Rome. The commodity seems still thought too valuable to be lost, the only dispute is with whom it shall be deposited—whether with the Pope—General councils—Assemblies of modern Divines, or popular enthusiasts.

It may be pardonable or proper sometimes to direct the thoughts to points of a controversial nature, but enlightened views will suggest, that they should not be made the most frequent subjects of discussion in seasons consecrated to instruction in piety and virtue. A thorough knowledge of them cannot be thought necessary to render us true disciples of Jesus; if it were so, it would be, as has been somewhere observed, a “very learned, subtle, and ingenious thing to become a christian.” The principal end of preaching is not to render men expert in using the weapons of controversy, to imbue their minds with any particular views or sentiments on subjects of an abstract nature—to cause any number of speculative opinions, termed “articles of faith,” to be received. Knowledge, correct opinions, and faith in speculative points of controversy, however desirable, are not the most precious ingredients of Christianity.—They may exist together with pride, malevolence, with numerous infirmities of temper, and a vicious life. After all, a right heart and virtuous conduct constitute the “one thing needful.” Where this is secure, there is true religion, there is all, that is important of Christianity—there men are taught “to build on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”

WATTS ON AUTHORITY IN RELIGION.

WHEN doctrines of divine revelation are plainly published, together with sufficient proofs of their revelation, all mankind are bound to receive them, though they cannot perfectly understand them, for we know that God is true, and cannot dictate falsehood.

But if these pretended dictates are directly contrary to the natural faculties of understanding and reason which God has given us, we may be well assured these dictates were never revealed to us by God himself. When persons are really influenced by authority, to believe pretended mysteries in plain opposition to reason, and yet pretend reason for what they believe, that is but a vain amusement.

There is no reason whatever that can prove or establish any authority so firmly, as to give it power to dictate in matters of belief what is contrary to all the dictates of our reasonable nature. God himself has never given any such revelation: and I think it may be said with reverence he neither can nor will do it, unless he change our faculties from what they are at present. To tell us we must believe a proposition which is plainly contrary to reason, is to tell us that we must believe two ideas are joined, while (if we attend to reason) we plainly see and know them to be disjoined.

What could ever have established the nonsense of transubstantiation in the world, if men had been fixed in this great truth, That God gives no revelation contradictory to our own reason? Things may be above our reason, that is, reason may have but obscure ideas of them, or reason may not see the connection of those ideas, or may not know at present the certain and exact manner of reconciling such propositions, either with one another or with other rational truths; but when they stand directly and plainly against all sense and reason, as transubstantiation does, no divine authority can be pretended to enforce their belief, and human authority is impudent to pretend it. Yet this human authority, in the popish countries, has prevailed over millions of souls, because they have abandoned their reason, they have given up the glory of human nature to be trampled upon by knaves, and so reduced themselves to the condition of brutes.

“*The improvement of the Mind.*” Part II. Chapt. 4.

EXTRACT FROM A SERMON ON THE UNITY OF
GOD. BY REV. S. C. THACHER.

MARK XII. 29, 32, 34.

THE testimony of the sacred scriptures is so full, so clear, and so express as to the truth that God is *one*, that all christians, of all denominations, admit it as a primary and undeniable principle. It is so solemnly declared to us, both in the Old Testament and the New, That the Lord our God is *one* Lord, that there is none other but he, and that we shall have no other before him; that all christians must agree, that unless their opinions are consistent with this first and great truth, they must be unscriptural and false. Our Trinitarian brethren, however suppose that God is *not one*, in the common meaning of this word, but only in a mysterious sense; that there exists in the divine nature a three-fold division; and, consequently, they must believe that Moses, in the Old Testament, and our Saviour in the text, would have spoken more definitely and exactly if they had said: the Lord our God is one God in three persons—the holy *one* of Israel is in effect the holy *three*—there are none other but *they*. With regard to the meaning of the word *person* in this proposition, there is a very great diversity among our brethren; and, indeed, for the most part, they seem to agree in nothing with respect to it, but in condemning those who decline to use it. You will judge what this word must practically mean, however, when you consider, that they all suppose each of those persons has a distinct name, a distinct office—is a distinct object of petition, and a distinct object of worship; that the Father is the supreme and self-existent God, the Son is the supreme and self-existent God, and the Holy Ghost is the supreme and self-existent God. Still, however, though nothing seems wanting here to complete the idea of three distinct beings, our brethren most earnestly, and I doubt not, most sincerely disclaim the idea of three Gods; and heaven forbid, my friends, that we should impute to them any belief which they disavow. I would only say, that my own mind is unable to make the distinction between a person and a being. I can conceive of *one* God; or I can conceive of *three* Gods; but of an existence which is neither one nor three, in any known meaning of these terms, and yet is affirmed to be both one and three, I cannot form the most remote concep-

tion. The moment that I affix any idea whatever to these words, they form in my mind the most express and formal contradiction; other men's understandings may be differently constructed; but for myself, unless the proposition of the Trinity means that there are three Gods, it does not convey to me the smallest gleam of meaning. One cannot with so much propriety be said to disbelieve such a proposition, as to be wholly ignorant of its meaning: it is not rejected because it is *mystery*, but because if it be not a contradiction in terms, it is *nothing*—nothing but words without any ideas. Our brethren, however, do not view the subject in this light, and as far as this is so, they deserve praise for following with fidelity, their best convictions of what is right. We, my friends, when we do the same, I should hope, would at least be thought not to merit censure.

We see in the world a vast variety of religions. They are, almost all of them, only so many systems of ceremony and different modes of superstition, placing religion in a sordid will-worship—in bodily services, repeating creeds and outward forms. True religion is a totally different thing. It consists in mercy, more than sacrifice—in doing, more than in believing—in fidelity and justice, more than any ritual services. Such, in particular, is the true *Christian Religion*. It makes loving God with all our hearts, and loving our neighbors as ourselves, to be more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. It makes a faith that could remove mountains, nothing, without that charity, which seeketh not her own, which hopeth all things, which endureth all things. It calls men off from superstition and idolatry, to the acknowledgement and the imitation of that One Supreme Being whose tender mercies are over all his works; and its exhortation to its professors is *Be ye holy as God is holy. Be ye merciful as he is merciful.* Dr. Price's Sermon, on Matt. v. 48.

"If we would find out the truth in many cases, says Dr. Watts, we must dare to deviate from the long-beaten track, and venture to think with a just and unbiassed liberty."

Improvement of the Mind.

"It is some degree of improvement, when we are afraid to be positive." *ibid.*

[Concluded from page 13.]

EVERY one that reflects, must perceive that we of the present day are in a different state, and one involving far greater dangers, than if we had lived in the age next the apostles, or if the beings through whom their sentiments have come to us had been perfect. For first, we may be blinded to the mistakes attending past views of religion, by the prejudices of education;—or secondly, should our eyes be open to the enormity of those errors which have deformed our religion, we are in danger of being repelled by disgust from religion itself.

It cannot fail to increase our apprehensions from the first of these dangers, to consider the nature of prejudice. Prejudice is the most subtle and the most powerful of all influences upon the mind. He who is embracing new opinions will perhaps be apprehensive;—some remains of attachment to his former notions will keep a check upon his speculations. But the prejudiced man fears not at all; he never suspects himself of error. There is nothing more remarkable in prejudice than this blindness. As it is not founded in reason, it is not easily affected by it. It has all the strength of rational conviction, without any of its flexibility. Prejudice is like the Incubus of the night season, which chains the faculties, and holds its power over the unhappy sufferer even after he is conscious of its influence. It is a visiter, not of the day time, but of the night. It troubles and it scares not the waking but those who are asleep. In fine, prejudice is a blind impulse. It is just as sure as if it had all evidence on its side, and as obstinate as an insensibility to all evidence can make it. Go to any distant people of the earth, whose notions are so extravagant and absurd, that it is impossible to name them without exciting astonishment:—Go to the strange and whimsical Hindoo, and try to reason him out of his prejudices; you may as well reason down the hills of his country to plains—you may as well reason his everlasting Monsoons into a new direction, as to reason him out of the everlasting prejudices of his land.—Enter your own bosoms for proof—you will find nothing so obstinate as a prejudice, you may reason it away for the moment perhaps, and it will come back again. You may think that you have exploded it, and behold it has quietly resumed its seat and empire in the mind, as if in mock-

ery and contempt of all your thinking and reflecting and examining.

From the combined influence of these two considerations, then, viz.—past errors which we all acknowledge, and the blinding power of prejudice, which none will deny;—from these two considerations, we might urge a very serious argument with every one for examining his opinions anew, and with new caution and more earnest prayer. Let not this be called the language of the fashionable liberality of the day—it is the language of reason and conscience. Who of us would not have admired Pascal or Fenelon or any distinguished Catholic, if we knew he had spent days and nights in the anxious, solemn, prayerful inquiry, whether he might not have imbibed error, from the authority of past times, and the influence of his early education?—And if one of those had risen in his might and broken the chains of prejudice, the world would have celebrated the achievement.—Why shall not we pursue the same course? Because our own age is perfect and past all improvement? If we think so, then indeed have we put the fatal seal of darkness on the eye, that was already blind with prejudice. But let us remember, that every past age has thought so too, and that the most ignorant have the most confidently entertained this opinion.

On this point, however, it is not now our intention to enlarge. We might draw a copious illustration of this subject from the creeds, and from the practical religious notions of the present day. It is not to be doubted that there are theological tenets, which could not have been thought of but with wonder and horror, and which would not have been admitted into the mind, if they had not been imbibed through the influences of education.—But not to dwell on these; there are practical notions of still greater consequence, which can be accounted for only by a reference to former views and opinions. The preternatural dread, which many entertain, of so simple an institution as the Lord's Supper, is an instance of this. We here see a relic of the belief in the real presence. Had we sat at the feet of Jesus, instead of deriving our notions of his religion from earthly sources, there would have been less of fear and of mystery in our religion, and more of simplicity and love; less of speculation and more of practice; less of rash judgment, and more of humble charity.—Christianity has come down to us

through ages of disputers, dogmatizers, mystics and tremblers in religion. There is still a spirit of boasting confidence, of contempt and uncharitableness, which is not to be done away by a change of names. There is still an unaccountable fear in many minds, a fear to examine, to think. There are still left some fetters of the mental bondage. Had Jesus taught us, we should have feared nothing but the displeasure of God; we should have learned that religion was no mystery, but a simple truth and reality, intended to mingle with every action and feeling of every day;—not an abstract and unintelligible something to be set aside from the common pursuits of life, as it has been in former times, and still is in a measure, but a real influence on the heart and the conduct; in fine we should have learnt to be modest, gentle and kindly affectioned; and that the fundamental article of religion was that, which required us to be good and devout Christians.

But we must turn to the other danger which has been mentioned—the danger of going to extremes, when once we come to doubt what we formerly believed. This danger is acknowledged in all other subjects; and why should it not be in religion? History and our own experience teach us that it is much to be dreaded. Look back to Catholic France, afterwards becoming a nation of Atheists. See every Catholic country, at this moment, crowded with infidels. Or look at Germany, where the most rigid forms of protestant religion have prevailed, now liberal even to licentiousness! Or in fine, look over the Protestant world, and see how the strictest sects of the Reformation, have been the first to yield to a milder faith, and you will perceive this tendency to fly soonest and farthest from what is most severe and extravagant. The very extravagances of past opinions do therefore lay us under a special exposure. This exposure is increased by many strong propensities of the human mind—by the love of novelty and excitement—the pride of wisdom and independence—and the consciousness or the fancy of religious freedom.

The perversions of Christianity may make us infidels, and this indeed is one of the great causes of infidelity, or the errors of faith, may make us skeptics. Because certain doctrines have been abused, we may resolve to believe nothing about them. We may look back upon the abuses of the doctrines relating to man's character and capacities,

and the conditions and means of salvation—we may consider and regret these abuses, until we work ourselves into a passion for censure and condemnation, and until we set aside the whole in a mass, confounding the true with the false.

But let us turn to views that are practical. The prevalence then of the notion that faith is a supernatural gift may drive us too near the religion of nature. Since reason has been too much discarded from religion, we may in our zeal to escape from this error, become overmuch rational. Because religion has been considered to consist in inward transports, and too little as appearing in the outward actions, we may conclude that internal piety is a mere fancy, and that the outward life is our only concern. Yes, we may forget that piety is an inward, spiritual, living principle in the soul, awakened and cherished by contemplation and prayer—a principle, which when it exists in any strength, will often shew itself in the glow of devotion, though the only genuine test is a holy life. Again, there has been too much excitement in religion, and some of the present day may have a horror of excitement. Revivals of religion have been extremely abused, and we may despise and ridicule the very name; and what is worse, may forget that we all need, yes, as individuals, churches and congregations, that we do greatly need, in the true and sober sense of the words, a revival of religion among us.—Evening meetings have been perverted to very injurious purposes, and therefore all such meetings may be looked upon with suspicion or abhorrence. Too much has been expected of the Divine influence, and we may expect nothing and receive nothing.—Preachers have been too severe, and perhaps we will hardly consent that they should be serious; too rude and pointed perhaps, and we will have them too general and gentle.—Christians have been too gloomy, and we perhaps are too light; too rigid, and we are too indulgent; too formal and we are too careless. There has been too much terror in religion, and we perhaps go to the extreme of having none at all; too much superstition and we will have no fear. Men have thought and preached that every body, with scarcely an exception, was going in the broad road to destruction; and some of the present day believe that nobody is. Religious anxiety has taken the forms of fright and distraction, and we are set against all anxiety. Religious experience has been wickedly feigned

and extravagantly represented, and we perhaps may wish for none of it.—What horrible doctrines have been preached, some one reflects, and he has a dread of doctrines.—What terrible discipline too, there has been in the church, and he cannot bear discipline. And, indeed, with regard to the importance of entering the church, no doubt, too much has been made of it, and hence it is, in part perhaps, that many make nothing of it.

It would be easy to extend these reflections to a much greater length, but our limits forbid it. "I had rather believe says Lord Bacon all the fables in the Legend and the Talmud and Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind." We shall venture to add, that it were better to believe all that the Pope has decreed and Calvin taught, than to believe nothing. And it were better in religion to do all that they commanded, than to do nothing. Yes, we repeat, better were it to suffer penances, to make pilgrimages, to sell relics—better were it to go mad with zeal, or to be distracted with anxiety than to feel nothing and to do nothing. To err in religion is the lot of humanity; to neglect religion altogether is the path of transgression and the way to death.

The present is an age of religious light and liberty. The spirit of inquiry is spreading, especially in our country, and we may look for glorious results. But we must not forget our dangers. Aware of them, we shall strive to keep our minds free from prejudice and independent of human authority; and at the same time, we shall cautiously guard against the other extreme, and be careful that while we reject error, we do not also cast off what is true.

FROM ROBERT ROBINSON'S VILLAGE SERMONS.
COLOSSIANS II. 8, 9.

Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit; after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

HAD this caution been given us by any of the other apostles, who had not had the advantage of a learned education, we might have supposed, they censured what they did not understand; but this comes from the disciple of Gamaliel. He assigns two reasons for the caution. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy.* Why? Because philosophy doth not go on the same ground as christianity.—

Philosophy is a body of wisdom made up of the speculations and conjectures and inferences of studious, learned men; but christianity is a body of information reported to us by the express command of Almighty God. This is the meaning of the expression, *after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*, i. e. Christianity. The apostle observes, that there is a perfection in the information given us by Jesus Christ, for he taught us only *facts*—but philosophy, which is the science of investigating the *nature* of facts, is on this very account uncertain, vain and deceitful, when applied to the Christian religion. Reduce the subject to two parts, and they amount to this; the wisdom of the heathen schools was vain and deceitful, because it was not true; and the wisdom of modern schools, if true in itself, is deceitful when applied to Christianity. It is this last view of the subject, on which we mean to fix your attention, and we shall only aim to explain and improve it.—God grant we may be edified!

To come to the point. Let us distinguish Christianity from the *philosophy* of it. By Christianity I mean the Christian religion. By the Christian religion I mean that set of facts, which Jesus Christ taught, and which are all recorded in the gospel. Our notion is that these facts are reported to us for the sake of the use to which we are able to apply them, and not laid down as philosophers lay down their speculations in the schools, for the sake of exercising the geniuses of young gentlemen to make improvements. This distinction between facts and their uses, apart from the philosophy of them, is founded in nature, and it is the more credible because it makes Christianity exactly like the world in which we live, and so gives it a character of divinity, shewing that the maker of the world is the author of our holy religion.

What we contend for is this, that our holy religion exactly resembles the world in which we live; and to make my meaning as clear as I can, I will lay a few truths before the two sorts of men in question i. e. the plain Christian who confines himself to facts and their uses and the Christian full of philosophy. By the way there are many Christians extremely ignorant of the wisdom of the schools, who yet will be always applying the science of other men to their own ideas of religion, and what with learned words and vulgar ideas, polished phrases and gross notions,

great sounds and little or no meaning, they make the Christian religion the most abstruse of all hard things in the world. Do you wonder you do not understand them? They do not understand themselves.

1. One fact reported in Scripture is that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The proof of this fact is made by bringing out the divine law, and comparing with it our conduct. The plain Christian attends to this fact, he examines his life, traces his actions, and finds they take their rise in disordered passions in his own bosom. This was an action of pride, that was an exercise of revenge, a third proceeded from anger, and a fourth from an immoderate love of the world. He carries back his reflection, and finds that his passions have been in disorder ever since he can remember. He soon finds out the use of the knowledge of the fact, for if it would give him pain to discover that he had lost his children or his property, or his health, it must needs fill him with sorrow to find that he has lost his innocence, and with that all right to be happy. Full of this just grief, he checks sin, and avoids temptations to commit it. Give this sad truth to a philosopher, and he will perplex it with hard questions, and answers yet more hard than the questions themselves, and will go into abundance of labyrinths, some before the creation of the world, and others after the consummation of it. There will come in this man's religion a great army of infants and angels, there will be Adam and Eve, and our immediate parents, and a world of people from all corners of the globe, and every one will bring a new question, and all together will lead us off from the great use of the knowledge of the fact, which is sorrow for our sin, and not that of Adam and infants, angels and heathens. When the good man of the house hath caught cold, and the good dame puts a little saffron into his drink, does she, doth he, doth any one in the family attend to any thing more than the effects which they know by experience will be produced?

2. It is reported in the holy scriptures that there is a God, the first cause of all things, the creator, the preserver, the benefactor, and friend of mankind; that he sent word to us by prophets and apostles, and above all by his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, that though he blamed our conduct, yet he pitied our condition, and would freely forgive all our offences of every kind through the mediation

of Jesus Christ. The plain christian hears this information, and examines it. He is not surprised that God should esteem man his creature, for he knows love is natural to him. He is not shocked that God should blame sin, for he himself is obliged to condemn it, though by so doing he passes sentence on himself.—He knows it must be in the power of God to make the wretched happy, and he at once perceives it will be highly to the honor of his wisdom and goodness to do so. He observes, that if any despise what it is so much to the honor of God to propose, he is exceedingly to blame, and ought to suffer the consequences. He is not offended that God should choose to dispense all this goodness by the hands of Jesus Christ; for he sees that there is but one first cause, and that God communicates his goodness to us by means in every case. He soon finds the use of this information; it resembles the fragrance of a flower, or the warmth of the sun; it draws and we walk after it, admiring, adoring, enjoying, and imitating God. Give a philosopher this truth, and he will perplex every part of it by inquiring how this God subsists, what is the precise nature of Jesus Christ, and so on, till, having dissected the subject into a thousand parts, given each an Egyptian, or a Hebrew, or a Greek name, and garnished the whole with scholastical ghosts, summoned by a kind of magick from all schools ancient and modern, he will render this glorious truth hardly credible, or glaringly false. Allow me to make one reflection while I think of it. You have heard some of your ministers speak of a dangerous set of men, whom they call, if I recollect the word rightly, deists, or some such name. I humbly beseech you not to be rash in censuring people for being enemies to the gospel. There may be, for any thing I know, such men in the world; but I shall never believe that sincere men are such, till they are distinguished as the Jews are in Rome by wearing a red hat. I do declare, and I am acquainted with several, and so are you, that some are reputed enemies to the gospel, only because they are enemies to that abuse of the gospel, of which we are speaking. It is not the gospel according to the evangelists that they find fault with, it is the gospel according to Wittemberg, where Luther taught; or to Geneva where Dr. John Calvin lived: great men, but they would have been much greater if they had not applied their PHILOSOPHY TO RELIGION.

FROM JEREMY TAYLOR'S "LIFE OF CHRIST."

"BUT we use arts to seem more righteous than we are, desiring rather to be *accounted* holy, than *to be*; as thinking the vanity of reputation more useful to us, than the happiness of a remote and far distant eternity. But if, (as it is said) circumcision was ordained, besides the signing of the covenant, to abolish the guilt of original sin, we are willing to confess *that*, it being no act of humiliation to confess a crime that all the world is equally guilty of, that could not be avoided by our timeliest industry, and that serves us for so many ends in the excuse and minoration of our *actual impieties*; so that as Diogenes trampled upon Plato's pride with a greater fastuousness and humorous ostentation,—so do we with *original sin*, declaim against it bitterly to save the *others* harmless, and are free in the publication of this, that we may be instructed how to conceal the actual.—Our charging of ourselves so promptly with Adam's fault, whatever truth it may have in the strictness of theology, hath but an ill end in morality; and so I now consider it without any reflection upon the precise question."

"Adam's sin did discompose his understanding and affections; and every sin we do, does still make us more unreasonable, more violent, more sensual, more apt still to the multiplication of the same or like actions: the first rebellion of the inferior faculties against the will and understanding, and every victory the flesh gets over the spirit, makes the inferior insolent, strong, tumultuous, domineering, and triumphant. And even in this sense here is origination enough for sin, and impairing of the reasonable faculties of human souls, without charging our faults upon Adam."

"From which premises we shall observe, in order to practice, that sin creeps upon us in our education so tacitly and undiscernably, that we mistake the cause of it, and yet so prevalently and effectually, that we judge it to be our very nature, and charge it upon Adam, to lessen the imputation upon us, or to increase the license or the confidence, when every one of us is the Adam, the man of sin, and the parent of our own impurities. For it is notorious, that our *own* iniquities do so discompose our naturals; and evil customs and examples do so encourage impiety; and the law of God enjoins such virtues, which do violence to nature; that our proclivity to sin is occasioned by the accident, and is caused by ourselves. Whatever mischief Adam did to

us, we do more to ourselves. We are taught to be revengeful in our cradles, and are taught to strike our neighbor, as a means to still our frowardness, and to satisfy our wranglings. Our nurses teach us to know the greatness of our birth, or the riches of our inheritance, or they learn us to be proud, or to be impatient, before they learn us to know God, or to say our prayers. And then, because the use of reason comes at no definite time, but insensibly and divisibly we are permitted such acts with impunity too long, deferring to repute them to be sins, till the habit is grown strong, natural and masculine, and because from the infancy it began in inclinations, and tender overtures, and slighter actions, Adam is laid in the fault, and *original sin did all*: and this clearly we therefore confess, that our faults may seem the less, and the misery be pretended natural, that it may be thought to be irremediable, and therefore we not engaged to endeavor a cure: so that the confession of our original sin is no imitation of Christ's humility in suffering circumcision, but too often an act of pride, carelessness, ignorance, and security."

THE orthodox SEED makes the following honest confession in his "Letters to a friend on the satisfaction of Christ;" and we think many of our orthodox brethren, who endeavor to meet our objections to the doctrine of the trinity, by explanations of the doctrine, would do well to follow his advice:—

"If you will be content to rest in *generals*, without inquiring into the *minute* circumstances, or embracing any *particular* explication of the ubiquity,—this is what I advise you to concerning the Trinity. And indeed in these high points, we are like people upon marshy ground. We may skim lightly over the surface; but if we fix our foot, if we dwell too long upon any particular spot, we sink irretrievably, and the more we struggle to get free, the more we are gravelled."

✧ THE LIBERAL CHRISTIAN will be published once a fortnight, in size and style similar to this.

The price to subscribers is *One Dollar* a year, payable on the receipt of the third number.

All subscribers who have not received the first and second numbers, may receive them by applying.

Communications (post paid) may be addressed to *The Editor of The Liberal Christian, Brooklyn, Conn.*